

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 15, 2018

Agenda Item: Seasonal Closure of White Bear Fishing Access Site (R4)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

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Background: White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located on the edge of Great Falls. The site has become an attraction for problematic use and behavior during summer months (June-September), including under-age use of alcohol, illegal drug use, violent behavior, public disturbance, vandalism and litter. This activity has caused numerous disturbances with neighbors and other site users and requires a high law enforcement presence and high demand on maintenance resources. Neighbors have expressed concerns about their safety and security because of the users of the FAS. The Commission closed the site from June-September in 2015, 2016 and 2017 to eliminate this type of behavior while a long-term solution to trade the site was being explored. Presently the Department is pursuing two options for trade.

Public Involvement Process & Results Both before and after the closures, the public made frequent reports and complaints about users at the site. The neighbors approached the Commission in September 2014 during the open-microphone session and raised concerns about their safety. The public commented during the 2015, 2016 and 2017 seasonal closure processes. FWP staff meets with the Homeowners Associations frequently to address complaints and concerns for safety. The public continues to contact the Department through direct phone calls, TIPMONT and County law enforcement.

Alternatives and Analysis: The 2015 seasonal closure eliminated the problems in 2015. In 2016, with no closure in place, the problems returned. The Commission reinstated the closure in July 2016 and again in 2017. A seasonal closure is a proven method to eliminate this behavior at the site and ensure public/neighbor safety. A closure would allow FWP law enforcement staff to issue citations for trespass or violation of the closure rule at anytime during the summer months, thereby removing any incentive for these individuals to visit the site. The seasonal closure would end in September and the public could resume use of the site.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP is asking the Commission to re-instate a seasonal closure from June 1, 2018 through September 4, 2018 to control use at the site. If a closure is in place, FWP can enforce the Commission rule. The Department will continue to search for a long-term solution for trade or disposal of the site.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission re-instate the seasonal closure of the White Bear Fishing Access Site as recommended by FWP.